

## CALIFORNIA DISPROPORTIONALITY PROJECT

### At-a-Glance: DRAFT

#### Background

Although available research tells us there is no difference between races or ethnicities in the rates at which children and youth are abused and neglected, we know that there is a significant difference in the rates at which children and youth of color (particularly Black and Native American children) are reported to child welfare systems. Furthermore, we know that they receive fewer services while in out-of-home care; they are less likely to find a permanent home; and they leave the system less prepared for adulthood than white children and youth. Our goal in the California Disproportionality Project is to reduce disproportionality and these disparities in outcomes for children, youth, and families of color in the child welfare system.

Casey Family Programs and the Annie E. Casey Foundation are committed to improving the lives of children and families throughout the nation. Together with the California Department of Social Services, they are funding up to 12 county public child welfare agencies along with one State-level team to work intensively on these issues over the course of roughly 18 months. This work will take place in a collaborative learning environment that will focus on sharing ideas and tracking what works and what doesn't, such that the ideas that work to reduce disproportionality and disparities can be spread across child welfare agencies, communities, and their partners.

#### Participants

Up to 12 counties in California will be selected to participate in this process. The selection process will require each county to demonstrate leadership commitment, inclusion of racial disproportionality and disparities as a goal in the system improvement plan (SIP), identification of key community partners to join in this work, and existing activities such as facilitated conversations about race, the formation of workgroups, and/or reviews and discussions of race-related child welfare data.

Each selected county will form a core team that will be comprised of many different skills and perspectives. This will include *youth and families*, all parts of the *communities* where families live, *Tribal partners*, *agency leadership*, and other *agencies* that serve and support children and families. This core team will be committed to changing the way children, youth, and families are provided supports and services in the child welfare system

#### The Work of the Counties

Each county team will work together to form a **shared value** for what success will look like for this project in its own county and communities. This shared value will be created through conversations with families, youth, communities, partners, and agency staff. Ultimately, this shared value statement, together with the results of ongoing data review and a facilitated self-assessment process will form the core of a county-developed workplan that will serve as the foundation for the team's work. Work in this project will include:

- Collection and review of **data** to describe what disproportionality and disparities look like at the individual county and state level, so all participants will know the extent of the issue in their communities and be able to track improvements;
- Facilitation of open **communication** so that challenging conversations can occur within the teams, with others in the county, across the state, and ultimately across the country;
- Active **community engagement** that occurs on an ongoing and continuous basis in recognition of the fact that it will take the wider community to brainstorm ideas and implement solutions;
- Active **family and youth engagement**, in both identifying challenges in the system and being part of the solutions; and

- **Training and engagement of staff** in order to educate staff on how their decisions and day-to-day practices impact disproportionality and disparities, as well as how to change those practices.

#### **Project Support**

Counties that participate in this project will receive support on a number of levels:

- **Project Staff.** A two-person full-time project staff will be the primary supports and contacts for participating teams, offering facilitation, coaching, and connection to other counties and technical assistance providers.
- **Project Chair.** Pat Reynolds-Harris, founder of the California Permanency for Youth Project, will serve as the Chair of this project, providing vision, ideas, and technical assistance to counties.
- **Technical Assistance Providers.** A cadre of 12-14 technical assistance providers have been engaged to provide direct onsite facilitation and support to participating counties, per the discretion of the project sponsors and staff. These providers have breadth and depth of knowledge and experience, and include birth parents, youth, community partners, public child welfare agency staff, and child welfare trainers/consultants.
- **Other Participating Counties.** Regular conference calls and four in-person convenings will be held to bring together the core teams from all participating counties. Cross-county sharing and learning will be a key focus for the project staff, chair, and technical assistance providers.

#### **Anticipated Timelines**

This project will officially launch in April 2008 with the release of an "Intent to Participate" letter. Below are the goal timelines for this project.

Application Disseminated	May 2008
Counties Selected	July 2008
All County Convening 1	Oct. 2008
All County Convening 2	Mar. 2009
All County Convening 3	Sept. 2009
All County Convening 4	Jan. 2010

#### **Contact Information**

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